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ABSTRACT

This report presents a nontechnical summary cf research conducted by the Cultural Study Center, University of Maryland, 1969-72. The study areas all centered on the black student, include attrition, admissions, demographic and attitudinal variables, vocational interests, and the University Racial Census. Recommendations based on Center studies are suggested. (MJM)

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CULTURAL STUDY CENTER

Office of Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

College Park, Maryland

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Remarks to the Chancellor's Commission of Minority Students, December, 1972.

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SUMMARY

The summarized research and recommendations for future efforts by the University of Maryland, College Park campus, were presented to the Chancellor's Commission on Minority Affairs, December 11, 1972. Two of the recommendations for future University efforts were already under way at that time, i.e., Afro-American Studies Program major has received approval from the University Senate and the Office of Admissions and Registration is currently recruiting a Director of Minority Student Recruitment. The report, herein, to the Commission, however, does not cite the above recent changes.

The summarized research suggests that black students when contrasted with white students bring different socio-cultural patterns to the campus. These patterns include different expectations of the University, different regression weights for the prediction of freshman grades, longer adjustment periods to the campus, concern about race and different major and vocational choice schedules. The term "different" is not meant to infer less-than or negative quality but rather is highlighted to suggest areas of concern. Hopefully, the Commission would have considered some or all of the above in its report to the Chancellor.

The report covers 14 of 33 Cultural Study Center reports and published studies. These were selected because of their topical relevance. A Cultural Study Center bibliography of all completed studies is available upon request.

The Cultural Study Center (CSC) of the University of Maryland, College Park, has conducted studies which include attrition, admissions, demographic and attitudinal variables, vocational interests and the University Racial Census. The studies represent an on-going, continuous and systematic effort to produce information for different audiences, i.e., administration, faculty, students, Board of Regents, other colleges and universities and the public. The information is intended to make a difference, positively, in how minority students are viewed and offer to the university community recommendations based on the data. The earliest studies were conducted using the freshman class of 1968 and have continued to date. More recent efforts of the CSC have included studies of selected demographic and attitudinal variables on Oriental, Spanish surname and Native American students, but the studies discussed in this report are centered on black students.

The attrition rates for second semester black and white students are about the same (DiCesare, Sedlacek and Brooks, 1972). While attrition rates by class and for the end-of-the-year would be of interest, these are not yet available from the CSC. An informal analysis using the University Racial Census, by year, for all black students indicates that the attrition is about 1/3, again about the same as for white students.

Black freshman and white freshman grades are about equally predictable if sex of the students is not considered, but females tend to be more predictable than males and white males tend to be more predictable than black males (Pfeifer and Sedlacek, 1971). Black student grades appear more predictable than white student grades beyond the freshman year, which suggests that black students require a longer period of adjustment to the predominantly white campus than do white students (Farver, Brooks and Sedlacek, 1973). That a "mixed picture" of predicting black student grades exists, reflects many unexplained measurement

artifacts. Representative sampling represents the most pressing measurement problem. New predictors other than just the traditional standardized measures and high school indices should be applied. Until more information has been collected, it is premature to confirm the validity of current admissions requirements (see Sedlacek, 1973, for discussion).

Little data are available on the progression of University of Maryland students from the freshman through upperclassman levels. For this reason, a study of black students as well as other student ethnic or cultural groups seems warranted. Preliminary data suggest that the number of returning freshmen is high, suggesting that students take insufficient credits to advance to the sophomore level or experience academic difficulty.

Black students tend to select their academic majors earlier than do white students, yet a larger percentage end up with a general studies major (Brooks and Sedlacek, 1972). This suggests that black students prefer a general studies major (which is not likely the case) or that black students could have benefited from educational counseling. Black students also tend to select social science majors while white student majors are distributed across the thirteen colleges. Little data currently exist on how and why black students select certain majors and ways new majors might be introduced. Blacks, as well as white students, reported hesitance in taking courses unfamiliar to them; however, black students might even be more cautious (than thought previously) in pursuing studies in the physical sciences and other non-social science areas (Brooks and Sedlacek, 1969).

Black students tend to make their vocational choice earlier than do white students and report more certainty with their choice (Brooks and Sedlacek, 1969).

Their vocational choices tend to be social service type roles, i.e., government, teaching, management, social work, etc., (Kimball, Sedlacek and Brooks, 1973). The writer believes that a large percentage of black students pursue vocational fields that were not originally planned. No doubt, recent opportunities for blacks in the employment market account for the lack of apparent planfulness. Given that black students experience more random conditions with respect to the employment market, more vocational counseling seems warranted. It is not unreasonable to expect that black students develop vocational maturity at a later stage than do white students because of restricted ranges of experience and random conditions of the employment market. No data exist yet on the post college experiences of our black students.

While personal and social counseling is generally warranted on the university campus, the writer feels that black students tend to view such services as a "middle class" phenomenon. Another way of expressing black student concerns would be to indicate that much of their concerns center around the lack of financial assistance and, of course, race. Unless black students perceive the "system" as changing, it would appear less likely that they would view personal and social counseling as being helpful. More time and effort then must be given to finding ways of establishing social and personal counseling as being more beneficial.

Interestingly, black students who perceived the University to be racist (whether it is or not is not the issue) remained at the University, while black students who felt otherwise did not remain at the University (for various reasons) (DiCesare, Sedlacek and Brooks, 1972). Similarly black students who remained, intended to finish school and felt that the University had a social obligation to blacks in the State of Maryland, while those black students who did not

remain felt otherwise. It may be that the University is attracting a different black student in recent years.

A profile of the black student indicates that his or her family's median income is much lower than the median income of $16,000 for white students' families. Black students' parents have less education than do white students but stress the need for education. A larger percentage of black students aspire to high degrees than do white students and feel more strongly about the race issue than do white students. It appears that because black students have less money, they have dated less, watched TV more, lived on the campus and used the Student Union somewhat more frequently. Black students report studying about as much as do white students (Brooks and Sedlacek, 1969; Sedlacek, Brooks and Herman, 1971; Van Arsdale, Sedlacek and Brooks, 1970, 1971). Little or no data exist at this time on the study habits of black students and how they use their time. Such information would give much help in understanding how black students develop academic interests.

A crucial area of concern, and perhaps where the least bit of information and data are available here or elsewhere, has to do with the classroom as a learning structure. Much of what black students and other students view the campus as, i.e., caring, concerned, academic-oriented, etc., rests with what faculty members do or don't do, teach or don't teach, etc. Whether a black student likes a faculty member's teaching style, choice of text, 8:00 AM class schedule, being among mostly whites, etc., influences his or her achievement motive. This is a difficult area of study because of the propriety of the classroom, but some controls can be introduced for study and the paucity of information suggests that this area of study requires urgent attention.

Racism does exist on the University of Maryland campus. Operationally, racism exists in the forms of negative attitudes toward blacks and in the lack

of commitments to various race-related programs (Sedlacek and Brooks 1970, 1973; Sedlacek, Brooks and Chaples, 1971). The lack of commitment to race-related programs includes the absence of a Director of the Equal Opportunity Recruitment Program, the Graduate School recruiting minorities and the lack of a minor or major offering by the Afro-American Studies Program, too few black faculty and staff, and too little financial aids for minority students. On the other hand, the University has taken more positive steps in recent years which include the establishment of the Afro-American Studies Program, Intensive Educational Development Program (IED), the Nyumburu Cultural Center, the Human Relations Office, the Division of Minority Student Affairs and the Cultural Study Center. The University must assume the burden of responsibility for its commitments to its minority community. It has the resources and the direct support of many black faculty and staff in this endeavor.

Several areas require attention; these include the recruitment of undergraduate and graduate minority students. Since national indicators (Chronicle of Higher Education, April 1972, and the Cultural Study Center's national survey of minority admissions to large universities [Sedlacek, Brooks and Mindus, 1973]) have indicated that the growth of new black freshman enrollment is down from a year ago; the writer suggests that a junior and senior year program of academic support be made available to selected feeder high schools. This could be done with the use of PACE program students (People Active in Community Effort) at no additional costs to the University. The recruitment of minority students to the graduate school is more complex; however, it is recommended that departmental budgets include monies for assistantship and stipends to minority students, and that any department which does not make use of the monies must revert the monies. Outreach mechanisms are needed also to attract black students to use the existing University services more; i.e., Counseling Center, Nyumburu Cultural Center,

Placement Office, etc. It appears that unless a black student is enrolled in a special program, Honors or IED, little or no outreach mechanisms are available. Last, the Cross-Cultural Center suggested by Chancellor Bishop (Address to the general student body, 1971) should be considered in the deliberations of the Commission on Minority Students. The Cross-Cultural Center would offer academic majors and minors which are not currently possible with existing race-related programs.

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